



Terry Martinez, a vibrant member of the Watsonville Senior Center, enjoys the community and activities that have brought her out of her shell over the past eight years.

The importance of dining sites: “I am very thankful we have this”

When you meet Terry Martinez, you would never guess that she used to be quiet and shy. She brings a warm and welcoming presence to the Watsonville Senior Center in downtown Watsonville, where she has been a regular attendee for more than eight years.

She first started attending the center because her mom used to go there. The meals and dancing always looked like fun to Terry. Now, Terry visits the center in downtown Watsonville as often as she can, enjoying a wide variety of activities and the nutritious lunches that are served Monday through Friday by Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County.

In all, we provide more than 23,000 meals to seniors at dining sites across Santa Cruz County each year.

“I’m really happy. I have made a lot of friends,” she said. The community of people at the center helped her come out of her shell, too.

In addition to healthy meals and companionship, Terry enjoys cardio exercise on Mondays, yoga on Tuesdays and Thursdays, arts and crafts on Wednesdays, and dancing on Fridays. She has also joined several group trips, including excursions to museums in San Francisco and an upcoming whale watching tour.

“I keep myself busy there, and I like everything,” Terry said.

Terry is always happy to invite people to experience all that the Watsonville Senior Center has to offer.

“It is very important to the community,” she said. “I myself am very thankful we have this going on, not only for myself but for all these other people.”

Ensuring Ongoing Services for our Community



Community Bridges and Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County will continue to operate out of Live Oak Senior Center on Capitola Road for at least the next 24 months.

We are pleased to announce that we have reached a short-term lease agreement with the Live Oak School District (LOSD), allowing Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County to continue operating out of the Live Oak Senior Center for the next 24 months. While this extension ensures that we can continue serving more than 1,700 older adults who rely on the site daily for nutritious meals and friendly connections, it is still not the long-term solution needed to provide stability for our services.

Under the new agreement, Community Bridges will pay \$4,480 per month in rent and will be responsible for thousands of dollars in essential repairs to the facility, including replacing the HVAC system, repairing the roof, and repaving the parking lot — all longstanding responsibilities of the school district. These repairs must be completed by November 1, with a final deadline of March 31, 2025. Failure to meet this deadline could result in the school district terminating the lease with a 90-day notice.

We have worked diligently with the school district to secure a long-term solution, offering to purchase the property above market value or commit to a long-term lease with substantial upfront payments. Unfortunately, despite our efforts, an agreement has not yet been reached. We remain hopeful that the

News & Notes

We're excited to share a special opportunity for you to show your love for Meals on Wheels and support our cause at the same time!

We now have a fantastic selection of merchandise featuring our logo and designs that celebrate our mission of providing nutrition and connection to local seniors.

From cozy hoodies and stylish T-shirts to stickers, hats, coffee mugs, and more, there's something for everyone at the [Community Bridges TeePublic store](#).

What's even better? A portion of each sale directly supports Community Bridges, helping us continue our vital work in Santa Cruz County.

Your purchase not only spreads awareness but also contributes to ensuring seniors in our community receive the meals and support they need.

Thank you for your ongoing support!

In the Press

Click the headlines below to read local and national news about Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County and older adult services.

school district will reconsider our proposals for the future of this important facility and to support the value our services provide to multigenerational families. A long-term lease or purchase of the property would allow Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County to continue operating out of the Live Oak Senior Center, where it has served the community for decades.

Though there has been speculation that the school district will tear down the Live Oak Senior Center if Live Oak area voters approve the school district's bond measure, [Measure N](#), this fall, we hope that the district will honor the community's vision for preserving services for older adults at the site. Out of respect for the ongoing negotiations with the Live Oak School District regarding a long-term lease, Community Bridges has chosen not to take a stance on Measure N. Community Bridges acknowledges the potentially positive implications that this measure may have on future teachers who provide services to the families we serve.

As we move forward with this temporary lease, our commitment to ensuring the long-term well-being of older adults in our community is unwavering. Meals on Wheels will continue to provide nourishment, dignity, and hope to those who depend on us, even as we work toward a permanent solution that guarantees stability for years to come.

—Raymon Cancino, CEO, Community Bridges

- [After past tension, Live Oak School District and Community Bridges sign two-year lease allowing Meals on Wheels to remain](#)
- [Rising demand, shrinking resources: The challenges facing Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County](#)
- [Nutrition programs for older adults face service cuts](#)

The Many Benefits of Swiss Chard



Swiss chard is a highly nutritious vegetable. It is also commonly known as silverbeet, spinach beet, perpetual spinach, crab beet, and mangold.

Swiss chard is a rich source of beta carotene and potassium. Swiss chard also supplies fiber, vitamin C, and magnesium. The vegetable is a superb low-fat source of vitamin E, which is usually found in high-fat foods. Though it contains iron, Swiss chard contains a compound called oxalic acid, which may limit the mineral's absorption by the body. Swiss chard contains high levels of nitrates, which have been shown to lower blood pressure, reduce the amount of oxygen needed during exercise, and enhance athletic performance.

Swiss chard contains an antioxidant known as alpha-lipoic acid. This has been shown to lower glucose levels, increase insulin sensitivity, and prevent oxidative stress-induced changes in patients with diabetes.

As a leafy green, Swiss chard is high in vitamin K. Vitamin K consumption can improve bone health. Vitamin K modifies bone matrix proteins, improves calcium absorption, and reduces urinary excretion of calcium. Low intakes of vitamin K have been associated with a higher risk of bone fracture.

People who are taking blood-thinners such as Coumadin, or warfarin, should not suddenly change the number of foods they eat that contain vitamin K. Vitamin K plays a large role in blood clotting, so it could interfere with the effectiveness of blood thinners.

Look for Swiss chard with firm, deep green leaves. Smaller leaves will be tenderer and have a milder flavor. Store chard in the refrigerator to keep fresh.

Unless the chard is young, the stalks should be separated from the leaves and given a little extra cooking time. Wash chard leaves and stems before using, as they are likely to have sand or dirt clinging to them. Separate the leaves from the stems if the chard is large, and swish the leaves around in a large bowl of cool water.

Swiss chard can be enjoyed raw in salads or on sandwiches or wraps, braised, boiled, sautéed or added to soups and casseroles!

Thank you for your ongoing support. Your kindness is transforming our community.

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